

Questions of Abkhazian history in the book by P. Ingorokva 'Georgi Merchule - Georgian writer of the 10th century'

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In his book, P. Ingorokva [*recte* Ingoroq'va – editor] devotes a significant place to the history of Abkhazia. Almost entirely dedicated to this issue is the fourth chapter of the book, entitled "The feudal state of Western Georgia ('Abkhazian Kingdom') and information about it in the work of Georgi Merchule" (pp. 114-295).

What specific information about the Abkhazian Kingdom is contained in G. Merchule's work 'The Life of Gregory of Khandzta'? First of all, it is reported that Gregory and his companions went to 'Abkhazia' with the aim of creating monastic abodes there and were well received by the Abkhazian king Demetrius and (vid. 'The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta', ed. N.Y. Marr. 'Texts and Research on Armeno-Georgian Philology', 1911, pp. 100ff.), in this work, some historical figures of 'Abkhazia' (Dmitri II, Bagrat Sharoeli and others) are mentioned, and finally, in the well-known formula - "Kartli is considered a vast country, in which church-services are performed and all prayers are conducted in the Georgian language" (ibid, p. 113) - G. Merchule meant not only Kartli proper, but also West Georgia ('Abkhazia').

All these facts are well known in Georgian historiography, but, nevertheless, P. Ingorokva decided to write a whole study on the basis of these brief notices, which occupies about 10 printed sheets in his book.

So, what prompted P. Ingorokva to undertake such an extensive study? The reason for this was his belief that "the views on the history of West Georgia – 'The Abkhazian Kingdom', which are accepted in Georgian historiography, do not correspond to reality" (p. 116). P. Ingorokva specifically refers to the following "views": 1) the question of the ethnic affiliation of the 'Abazg[ian]s' of antiquity and the 'Abkhaz[ian]s' of the Middle Ages, 2) the question of the time and conditions of the formation of 'The Abkhazian Kingdom', and 3) the question of the nature of the national policy of the Abkhazian Kingdom (see pp. 116-117 of his book).

Turning to the direct analysis of the part of the book in which the aforementioned questions of the history of Abkhazia and 'The Abkhazian Kingdom' are discussed, it should be immediately emphasised that P. Ingorokva puts forward a clearly mistaken and tendentious thesis on the first question (the ethnic affiliation of the Abazg-Abkhazians), distorts the views of Georgian historians on the second and third questions, and also tries to attribute to himself the advancement of scholarly positions long known in Georgian historiography.

Let's start with the first question. On page 116 of his book, P. Ingorokva writes: "The territory of Abkhazia at the time when 'The Abkhazian Kingdom' emerged, i.e., in the 8th century, was inhabited by Georgian tribes, and this is not only at that time, in the 8th century, but throughout the entirety of ancient history, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Abkhazians and other tribes living in Abkhazia (Apsils, Missimians, Sanigs) were purely Georgian tribes of Georgian origin, speaking a Georgian dialect, like other Georgian tribes of Western Georgia - Kartvelians, Mingrelians, and Svans."

P. Ingorokva repeats the very same on page 188, on page 294, and in other places of his book.

So, on the basis of what data does P. Ingorokva try to "substantiate" his erroneous thesis that the Abazg-Abkhazians of antiquity and the Middle Ages were not the ancestors of the modern Abkhazian people but were a Kartvelian tribe?

To substantiate his claim, P. Ingorokva puts forward three arguments: 1) the etymology of the ethnonyms 'abasg-abazg', which he traces back to the term "meskh", 2) references to some ancient authors who allegedly indicate that the territory of Abkhazia proper was inhabited by Moskh[ian]s-Meskh[ian]s in antiquity, and 3) ethno- and toponymic facts, which, in his opinion, suggest that Kartvelian tribes were the indigenous people of almost the entire Black Sea coast of the Caucasus (by the way, P. Ingorokva borrows the latter point, without reference to the source, from N.Ya. Marr) (1).

(1). In the work 'The term "Scythian" ' in 1922, N. Marr wrote: "Linguistic material reveals the interaction of these Japhetic peoples (meaning Mingrelo-Chans - Z.A.) with the Ionians at the ethno-cultural stage of development, which has paramount importance for ethnogenetic issues, but primarily for the populated territory inhabited by Chans and Mingrelians, and this is the entire Black Sea coast from Sinop with Halis to Anapa, to Panticapaeum. Today, the coastal distribution of the Chan-Mingrelians has decreased... " (See N. Ya. Marr. Selected works, vol. V. M.-L., 1935, p. 25).

Let's analyse these "arguments."

1. P. Ingorokva writes that "the original name of this tribe (i.e. the Abkhazians - Z.A.) was Moskhi, the same as Meskhi" (p. 137). Further (pp. 137ff.), he presents the following etymology - Moskh-Maskh-Basgkh-Abasgkh, etc. First of all, it should be emphasised that the position on the etymological connection between the terms 'Abkhaz' and 'Meskh' Ingorokva borrows without reference to the source from N.Ya. Marr (see his work 'The History of the Term "Abkhaz" ' in the collection 'On the

Language and History of the Abkhazians', 1938, pp. 44-52).

The main point is that neither Marr nor Ingorokva, who repeats his ideas, could prove the authenticity of such an etymology, which at best can be deemed a hypothesis. If this hypothesis is proven, it does not yet speak of the ethnic identity of the Abazg[ian]s and Meskh[ian]s. In particular, N.Ya. Marr himself did not claim this but allowed the possibility of the settlement of the Abazg-ian] ancestors much further south, adjacent to the Meskh[ian]s (*ibid.*), whose name could have spread to the ancestors of the Abkhazians.

2. To confirm the position that ancient writers localise the Moskh[ian]s in the territory of Abkhazia, P. Ingorokva refers to the following authors: Hecataeus of Miletus (5th century BC), Palaephatus of Abydos (4th century BC), historians of the Mithridatic Wars, and Strabo (1st century BC) (see p. 137).

Let's start with the latter. P. Ingorokva writes: "And in later times, the historians of the wars of Mithridates the Great, as well as Strabo himself, know the Abkhazians only under the name of Moskh[ian]s (as their neighbours, they mention the Heniochs and the Kerketae)" (p. 137).

Here, first of all, P. Ingorokva, for greater persuasiveness, presents one source (historians of the Mithridatic Wars) as two sources (the "historians" and Strabo). The fact is that Strabo, enumerating the 'small peoples of the Caucasus', writes that he borrows this information from the historians of the Mithridatic Wars (see the journal 'Vestnik of Ancient History', 1947, No. 4, p. 214); therefore, we are dealing with one source, and Strabo is not relevant in this case.

Now let's examine all these sources in substance.

Strabo, following the 'historians of the deeds of Mithridates', lists the Caucasian tribes in the following order: Acheans, Heniochs, Kerketae, Moskh[ian]s, and other 'small peoples of the Caucasus' (*ibid.*). Thus, we do not have a direct indication here that the Moskh[ian]s live precisely within the territory of Abkhazia. We only note that Strabo places the Moskh[ian]s next to the Kerketae.

Let's move on to Palaephatus, who reports: "The Moskh[ian]s adjoin the Kerketae" (see Latyshev, 'Reports...', Vol. 1, p. 270). Here, the Moskh[ian]s are also placed next to the Kerketae, but there is no precise indication of their localisation.

Now regarding the report of Hecataeus. P. Ingorokva does not provide the exact text of the source, but writes: "The ancient Greek author Hecataeus of Miletus (5th century BC) calls the tribe living in modern Abkhazia: Moskh[ian]s. According to Hecataeus, the neighbours of the

Moskh[ian]s in Abkhazia are Heniochs, Koraxes (inhabitants of the gorge of the Korax River, modern Kelasuri), Kerketae (Circassians living beyond the Caucasus Ridge) and Kharimatians. According to this report, the territory of the Moskh[ian]s is precisely limited to the zone of Inner Abkhazia (Abkhazia proper)."

In fact, Hecataeus writes the following: "Above the Kerketae live the Moskh[ian]s and the Kharimatians, below are the Heniochs, and above are the Koraxes" (see VDI, No. 1 for 1947, p. 316). Can one 'precisely' localise the Meskh[ian]s based on this confusing report? Of course not. If we believe Ingorokva, that the Kerketae mentioned here live 'beyond the Caucasus Ridge', and the Moskh[ian]s, according to Hecataeus, inhabit 'above the Kerketae', then we should place the Moskh[ian]s in the North Caucasus – 'above the Kerketae'. Thus, Ingorokva deliberately does not provide the exact text of Hecataeus and attributes to the author his own interpretation.

In fact, the issue is not as simple as P. Ingorokva tries to present it. The fact is that the Kerketae (as well as the Heniochs) are localised by ancient authors not only in the north-eastern sector of the Black Sea coast but also in the south-eastern sector, i.e., near the places where the Meskh[ian]s actually lived. For example, Quintus Curtius Rufus (1st century AD) places the Kerketae in the vicinity of the Mossynoeci and the Chalybes (see VDI, No. 1 for 1949, p. 288). It is precisely for this reason, it must be assumed, that Palaephatus says, "The Moskh[ian]s adjoin the Kerketae." This is where the confusion of localisation of individual Caucasian tribes arose among some ancient authors, to which Strabo drew attention (see VDI, No. 4 for 1947, p. 214). Therefore, the question of localising the Meskh[ian]s in the area of modern Abkhazia, relying on dubious information from individual authors, can in no circumstance be decided.

P. Ingorokva also omits the fact that many ancient authors, much better informed about the ethnic geography of the Western Caucasus than Hecataeus or Palaephatus, do not mention the Moskh[ian]s when speaking of this territory. For example, Pseudo-Scylax of Karyanda, listing in detail all the tribes of the Azov-Black Sea coast from the Don to Sinop, says nothing about Moskh[ian]s (VDI, No. 3 for 1947, pp. 242-243).

Finally, P. Ingorokva puts forward another 'argument' in favour of the Georgian origin of the Abkhazians. Referring to Leonti Mroveli, Ingorokva claims that the Abkhazians, Apsilians, and Sanigians are not mentioned in Mroveli's work because the author "considers them Georgian tribes, and it is these tribes that Leonti Mroveli assigns to the Egrisi group" (p. 181).

Before dwelling on this 'argument' (Ingorokva declares it a 'historical testimony of decisive importance'), a small historiographical excursion will have to be made. At one time (in 1941), when P. Ingorokva had to prove that Leonti Mroveli was a historian of the 8th

century, not the 11th century, he put forward the same argument, but in a completely different context, in favour of his reasoning. Thus, he wrote: "It is clear that the Abkhazian tribe at that time did not play any significant role in the life of the peoples of the Caucasus. Based on this, the composition of L. Mroveli was written earlier than the beginning of that great movement and political expansion of the Abkhazian tribe, which left such a significant mark in the political history of ancient Georgia, as a result of which the Abkhazian tribe was drawn into the general life of Georgia and made a significant contribution to the state-building of ancient Georgia" (Izvestia IYAIMK'a, Vol. X, p. 127). This "Abkhazian tribe" Ingorokva did not consider as Meskh[ian]s speaking the Georgian language at that time and, in particular, said that after moving the capital of the Kingdom to Kutaisi, "the Abkhazian dynasty... becomes Georgianised, switches to the Georgian language" (Izvestia..., p. 130).

However, now, when he needed at any cost to introduce confusion into the well-known issue of the ethnic affiliation of the mediaeval Abkhazians, he turned to the same 'argument' (the absence of mention of the Abkhazians in Mroveli) but changed it fundamentally. (We note, by the way, that P. Ingorokva, who freely criticises everyone and everything, always tactfully remains silent about the contradictions between his new ideas and old positions. However, the above position also belongs not to him but to Prof. K. Kekelidze).

Let's return again to Leonti Mroveli. So, Ingorokva claims that Mroveli does not mention the Abkhazians, Apsilians, and Sanigians because he considers them Egrisians. However, Ingorokva also omits the following important fact: 1. Mroveli uses the term 'Egrisi' in two senses: 1) to designate the whole of Western Georgia ('from Likhi... to the river of Lesser Khazaria' - see *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, Queen Anna's edition, p. 2) and 2) to designate Egrisi proper (Mingrelia) - the territory "between Egris-tskhali and Rioni, from the sea to the mountains, within which (territory) lie Egrisi and Svaneti" (ibid, p. 17). Consequently, the ethnographic border of Mingrelia was between [the rivers] Ghalidzga and Rioni. Mroveli defines the borders of Svaneti as follows: "(Territory) from Didoeti to Egrisi is Svaneti" (ibid, p. 19). Thus, the territory to the northwest of Egris-tskhali is not ethnographic Egrisi but another region, i.e., Abkhazia. Leonti Mroveli mentions this region (which, of course, Ingorokva remains silent about), in particular, when he speaks of the missionary activities of Andrew the First-called and Simon the Zealot, who allegedly spread Christianity "in Abkhazia and Egrisi" (ibid, p. 26).

Furthermore, if we follow P. Ingorokva's logic, Mroveli should not have mentioned the Svans either, since, according to Ingorokva, he also considers them Egrisi, but Mroveli repeatedly mentions the 'land of the Svans'.

All this suggests that Mroveli's fragmentary information cannot be assigned 'decisive importance' in the question of determining the ethnic affiliation of the Abkhazians, and this 'argument' of Ingorokva should be rejected as invalid.

3. Now let's move on to the so-called 'special' toponymic excursion of P. Ingorokva (pp. 146-188).

P. Ingorokva claims that all the names he provides (136) belong to 'the Georgian language world' (p. 146). In this case, we will not touch upon the geographical names in modern Southern Abkhazia (south of the R. Kodor), since most of them are indeed of Georgian origin, as for a certain period this area was part of Mingrelia, which is well-known to us without Ingorokva (see below). Let's focus on some of Ingorokva's toponymic exercises on the issues of North Abkhazian geographical nomenclature.

On pages 146-147, P. Ingorokva repeats the unconvincing etymology of the name 'Dioscuria — Tskhumi' from the Georgian word ტყუბი ('twins') [Translator's note: ტყუბი is an archaic form in Georgian for ტყუპი 'one of a pair of twins', the plural Nominative form being ტყუპები], which was proposed 45 years ago by I. Orbeli in his article 'City of twins "Dioscuria" and the tribe of charioteers "Heniohs" ' (see JMN, No. 5, 1911), and, of course, Ingorokva fails to refer to the primary source.

On pages 148-149, Ingorokva claims that the name of the Bzyb river comes from the Georgian ბზა ('boxwood'). In fact, the basis of this name is the Ubykh word *bzy*, which means 'water', 'river' (compare: Bze-agu, Bzych, Bznych, Bezjuej, Zjue-bze, and other names of rivers in the area of the Ubykh settlement, whose ancestors - the Sanigians - once lived in the Bzyb river area). Moreover, Ingorokva remains silent about the fact that the entire toponymy in the region of the R. Bzyp is of Abkhazo-Adyghean origin.

On page 149, Ingorokva derives the name Gagra from Georgian *Gag-ar-i*. In reality, the word Gagra comes from the name of the village *Gag-ri-psh*, where *Gag (Kak)* is a proper name, *ri* is an affix of possession, and *psh* is 'water' (in the sense of 'community')¹. Compare Gul-ri-psh, Zvand-ri-psh, and others. Besides, Ingorokva mistakenly claims that რიჟბ in Abkhaz means 'river', 'water'.

Further, a whole series of geographical names having the endings სთა and ნთა (Tsanta, Kudepsta, Gumista, etc.) Ingorokva declares to be Georgian for the reason that such endings are characteristic only of the Georgian language (p. 153). In fact, these endings are very characteristic of Abkhazo-Adyghean toponymy as well.

¹ A more recent etymology has been proposed by Valeri Kvarchia [K^warch'ia]. In view of the fact that at Gagra the mountains descend almost directly into the Black Sea, leaving just a narrow strip of land that is easy to defend from outside-attack (from the north-west), Kvarchia derives the toponym from a coalescence of the noun /a-gá/ 'the coast' and verb /a-k'-rá/ 'the/its-hold-MASDAR', with voicing assimilation of -k'- to -g-, to mean 'to hold/holding the coast'. [Translator's footnote]

On p. 160, Ingorokva provides the etymology of the name Sochi. Despite the fact that in both Abkhaz and Ubykh this word is used with the phone *ch* (S), Ingorokva decided to change this word to სოჭი to bring it closer to the [Georgian] dendronym სოჭი ('fir').

On p. 161, the etymology of the village name Achandara (აჭანდარა) from Georgian ჭანდარი 'poplar' is presented, and Ingorokva emphasises that the word ჭანდარი is "unknown to the languages of the Circassian group, while in Georgian it is a root-word." In this regard, it should be noted that the word აჭანდარ for the designation of the poplar is used in the Abzhywa dialect of the Abkhaz language (borrowed from Georgian).

On p. 165, Ingorokva cites the Italian name of a geographical point on the R. Ashe – *Chali-ziha*, in which the second part (*ziha*) is interpreted as Mingrelian ჯიხა ('fortress'), and the first part as Mingrelian ღალა ('river'). In fact, the word *ziha* means 'Zikhean' ('Adyghean'), and in *chali*, we must assume, we have the Turkish *kale* – 'fortress'. Therefore, *Chali-ziha* means 'Zikhean fortress'.

On the same page, Ingorokva claims that in the name *Maka-pse* (მაყა-ფსე) the name of a fortress located in this area with the Georgian name *Baga* is preserved. In fact, *maka* in Circassian means 'hay', *Maka-pse* = 'Hay River'.

On p. 163, Ingorokva explains the name *Old Lazica* used by Arrian, which, according to him, "significantly indicates that the population of this region (i.e., according to Ingorokva, to the north of Tuapse, in the area of the River Nidzhe-psukho. - 3. A.) belonged to the Laz branch of the Georgian tribes." It should be emphasised that based on this single mention by Arrian (later authors only repeat him), such a far-reaching conclusion cannot be drawn. It is possible that this refers to the northernmost point of the possessions of *Old Lazica*, i.e., the Colchidian state.

On pp. 183-186, Ingorokva declares all ancient names of rivers in Western Caucasus containing the root *ps* (Adyghe for 'water', 'river') to be Georgian, as he says this word is characteristic of the Georgian language, and in Circassian it is found as in a language related to Georgian or directly 'borrowed from Georgian' (p. 185). Here, Ingorokva criticises the work of S. N. Dzhnashia 'The Circassian (Adyghe) element in the toponymy of Georgia', omitting, by the way, that Acad. Dzhavakhishvili (see his work 'Basic historical and ethnological problems of Georgia, the Caucasus, and the Near East' (1939)) held the same view as Acad. Dzhnashia.

Using the methods employed by Ingorokva, one can 'prove' anything. It is permissible to ask questions: why are river-names with the root *ps* found specifically in Western Georgia, and not in Eastern Georgia? Why, the further we move through the Western Caucasus to the

north-west, the more do we encounter names with the root *ps*? Precisely because this root is characteristic of geographical names (rivers) in the languages of the Adyghe group.

If P. Ingorokva was familiar with the relevant archaeological, linguistic, anthropological, ethno-genetic, and other data on the origin of the peoples of the Abkhazo-Adyghean group, he might have been convinced that the hypothesis of Dzhavakhishvili - Dzhnanashia about the movement of the ancestors of this ethnic group from south to north in the distant past has a real scientific basis.

Thus, in a 'special excursion', instead of explaining the genuinely Georgian elements in the toponymy of Abkhazia (e.g., *Bichvinta*) as a result of centuries-old historical ties between the Georgian and Abkhazian peoples, Ingorokva attempts, admitting impermissible stretches, to 'justify' his 'theory' about the absence of Abkhazians in Abkhazia until the late Middle Ages.

Finally, it should be emphasised that Ingorokva, on the one hand, artificially adjusts data from the sources to fit his thesis, and, on the other hand, carefully conceals the evidence from sources that have a truly decisive significance for determining the ethnic affiliation of the Abkhazians. For example, in the Georgian chronicle of the beginning of the 13th century, 'The History and Praise of the Crown-Bearers' (published by K. Kekelidze, 1954, Russian translation), there are direct indications that ethnically Abkhazians do not belong to the Kartvelian group. Describing the arrangement of Georgian troops before the battle of Basiani, the chronicler writes: "On one side were Abkhazians and Imeretians, on the other - Albanians" (p. 77). The fact that the historian does not include Abkhazians among Imeretians (i.e., Georgians 'from beyond the Likhi Ridge') indicates their affiliation to another ethnic world. The same historian clearly distinguishes Abkhazians from Svans and Mingrelians (see *ibid.*, pp. 49, 50). Finally, the chronicler considers it necessary to translate the name *Lasha* into Georgian, explaining that it means 'Enlightener (of the universe)' (p. 53). In which language? – precisely in Abkhaz ("in the language of the Apsars". - See *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, the collection of Tsar Vakhtang, ed. 3. Chichinadze, p. 434).

The same chronicle also mentions Sanigs. Vardan Dadiani, writes the chronicler, "gathered all Svaneti, Abkhazia, Egrisi with Guria, Samokalako, Racha-Takveri, and Argveti, and, joining the Sanigs and Kashags, forced the boyars and warriors of these lands to swear allegiance to the Russian prince" ... (p. 48). Here, first of all, it should be noted that Sanigs and Kashags are specifically distinguished from the group of historically Georgian regions, which clearly indicates their different ethnic affiliation. It is also not accidental that Sanigs are placed next to Kashags, i.e., Circassians, by means of which, perhaps, the chronicler wants to indicate their ethnic proximity. And indeed, the Sanigs were the ancestors of the later Ubykhs and Sadzians, i.e., they were closely related to Kashags (Adygheans), and were not a 'Colchian-Laz (Mingrelian)' tribe, as Ingorokva claims (p. 135).

Discussing the Heniochi (pp. 134-137), Ingorokva also declares them an ethnically Colchian tribe and identifies them with the Sanigs. One of the arguments for attributing all tribes with names ending in *-khi* – Henio-khi, Sani-khi, Abas-khi, etc. – to the Georgians, Ingorokva puts forward the fact that this component (*-khi*) is typical for Georgian ethnic names (p. 138). In reality, this component is also characteristic of the ethnonyms of other Ibero-Caucasian peoples, for example, the Adygheans (compare Dos-khi, Zi-hi, Uby-khi (Pjok-khi), etc.). A similar component is still used in Adyghean languages as a plural indicator.

Furthermore, P. Ingorokva conceals the fact that the Heniokhi, according to ancient authors, are not a single tribe, but a collective name for a group of related tribes. For example, Pliny speaks not of one Heniokhi tribe, but speaks of "tribes of the Heniokhi, differentiated by many names." The same is indicated by an anonymous author of the 5th century: "the nation of Iniochs are of different tribes" (see Latyshev, Reports, vol. 1, p. 275).

Regarding the question of the ethnic affiliation of the Apsils (pp. 140-142), Ingorokva does not at all connect it with the self-designation of the Abkhazians – *apswa* (აფსუა).

Moreover, P. Ingorokva is not satisfied with the assertion that allegedly the ancestors of modern Abkhazians did not live on the territory of present-day Abkhazia during the ancient epoch and the early Middle Ages but tries to prove that they were not there even during the late Middle Ages either.

On p. 133, P. Ingorokva writes: "On Italian maps of the 15th century (maps of Benincasa - 1480 and C. Ferduchi - 1497), the harbour at the mouth of the Kelasur is designated as 'Porto Mengrelo'." From this, Ingorokva concludes that this region "was inhabited by Mingrelians, which is why the Kelasur harbour was called the Egrisian or Mingrelian harbour."

P. Ingorokva, presumably, does not know that at this period (second half of the 15th century) the territory of Abkhazia was part (together with Guria and Mingrelia) of the unified principality of Sabediano, headed by the Mingrelian *mtavari* ['overlord'] Bediani. This principality is even mentioned in the textbook 'History of Georgia', in which we read: "Sabediano included: Abkhazia, Mingrelia, Guria, and three significant Black Sea cities of that time - Tskhumi or Sebastopol (present-day Sukhum), Poti, and Kajta-tsikhe (ancient city of Petra). The territory of Sabediano also included the city of Batumi" (1946 edition, p. 306).

Italian travellers and cartographers of the 15th century usually call the principality of Sabediano Mingrelia and refer to all the possessions of the rulers of Sabediano as Mingrelian. For example, I. Barbaro, who personally visited the area in the second half of the 15th century, writes: "The Mingrelian ruler is called Bendian and owns two large fortresses

on the Black Sea: Bati (Batumi) and Sebastopol (Sukhum)" (see Bibl. inostr. pisat. o Rossii, 1836, p. 45).

If in this case we follow the logic of P. Ingorokva, it turns out that since Batumi and Sukhum in the 15th century were fortresses of the Mingrelian *mtavari*, their indigenous inhabitants should be Mingrelians, not Gurians or Abkhazians. However, when Barbaro speaks about the conversation of his companion with a resident of Batumi, he cites Georgian, not Mingrelian words.

So, the fact that on Italian maps of the 15th century Kelasur harbour is called 'Porto Mengrelo' does not yet indicate that Mingrelians lived here, in the area of the River Kelasur. This testimony should be understood in the sense that the Kelasur harbour is in 'Mingrelia', i.e., on the territory of the political unit of Sabediano.

But P. Ingorokva does not stop there and goes even further. He seeks to prove that even in the first half of the 17th century, the indigenous population of the present-day Gudauta region consisted of Mingrelians. On the same page, he writes: "The reports of the Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, who travelled around the Black Sea coast in 1641, deserve special attention. From the information of Evliya Çelebi, it becomes clear that the Georgian language (its Mingrelian dialect) (?! – Z.A.) was the native language of the population not only in *Shua-Sopeli* (in the Mokvi and Dranda districts) and in the Tskhumi (Sukhum) region, but the Georgian language was the native language of the population" and the main part of the Abkhazian principality in the Chach (*Sasherwashedzeo*) region. Evliya Çelebi writes: "The main tribe in Abkhazia is the tribe of Chach, which speaks the same Mingrelian language that is used on the other side of Fasha (i.e., Rioni. – Z.A. [ancient Phasis – Trans.]). This main region of the Abkhazian principality - the Chach region - is *Sasherwashedzeo*, namely the region whose centre was the settlement of Lykhny and which included the territory of the present-day Gudauta district from the Anakopian (Novyj-Afon) sector to the Samshito harbour (to the gorge of the River Mchis)" (p. 133).

The said contention by Ingorokva does not correspond to reality and is entirely based on misunderstanding. First of all, it should be noted that P. Ingorokva uses not the original work of Ev. Çelebi (in Turkish), but its Russian translation from English (see footnote on p. 133), in which the cited passage from Çelebi's work is misrepresented. In fact, in the original Çelebi, there is nothing similar to the quote given by P. Ingorokva (see above), as well as the interpretation of this quote.

In the original text by Ev. Çelebi, we read: "The tribe (clan) of Chache. They also speak Mingrelian since beyond the Rion lies Mingrelia exclusively " (see Ev. Çelebi. "Book of Travels", Istanbul, 1896-1897, p. 102).

The basic meaning of the adduced quote is that the tribe (clan) of Chache, in addition to the Abkhaz language, also speaks 'Mingrelian' since it resides in close proximity to Mingrelia. Therefore, it is not about the 'main' Abkhazian tribe (Çelebi does not use the word 'main' at all), but about the first area adjacent to Mingrelia (Çelebi travelled northwards) which directly borders Mingrelia and, according to Çelebi, is located in the region of the river Kodor ('one day's journey from the Rion'). Moreover, the author is not talking about a 'tribe' in the ethnic sense, but about the inhabitants subject to a specific 'clan', in this case, the clan of the Chachba (Shervashidze) *Tavads* ['princes' – Trans.]. Associate Professor S. Dzhikia writes on this topic: "I think that we should understand Çelebi's 'tribe' as a clan (საგვარეულო) or as the surname of some feudal lord, whom, it must be assumed, Çelebi takes, along with his subjects, for a single tribe" (see S. Dzhikia. 'Ev. Çelebi on the Laz people and the Laz Language', *Ibero-Caucasian Linguistics*, VI, 1955, p. 249).

Most importantly, however, Çelebi provides a number of Abkhaz words and phrases (over 30) to characterise the language of the 'Abkhazian region' (Çelebi. Cit. p. 109-110), but P. Ingorokva, of course, remains silent about this, since it completely contradicts his erroneous position.

P. Ingorokva does not even notice that he contradicts himself when he writes: "According to the information of Arcangelo Lamberti, by the middle of the 17th century, the north-western political and ethnic border of Odishi was the Rivere Kodor and the Dranda zone" (p. 134). And this is after, on just the previous page, Ingorokva claimed, referring to the incorrectly understood report of Çelebi, Vakhushti, and Father Ioanne, that Mingrelians lived in the Sukhum and Gudauta regions at that time.

By the way, the statement of Vakhushti and Father Ioanne that the border between Abkhazia and Mingrelia in the late 1620s ran through the sector of Anakopia (Novyj Afon 'New Athos') reflects only a temporary phenomenon when Levan II Dadiani, who made a successful campaign in Abkhazia in 1627 (see T[edo]. Zhordania. 'Chronicles', vol. II, p. 447), managed to establish a political border between Mingrelia and Abkhazia near New Athos. However, this border was soon moved back to the River Kodor.

The most reliable primary source for determining the political and ethnic border between Abkhazia and Mingrelia in the first half of the 17th century is the 'Description of Colchis' by Ar. Lamberti, who lived uninterruptedly in Mingrelia from 1633 to 1650. A. Lamberti writes: "The border of Colchis on the side of the Abkhazians or Abasgs is served by a river called Kodor by the locals" (see 'Collection of materials for the description of localities and tribes of the Caucasus' [in Russian], issue 43, p. 2). Or even more specifically: "Just as the Phasis separates Mingrelia from Guria, so does the Korax (Kodor) separate it from Abkhazia, and as after the Phasis, the Mingrelian language is immediately replaced by Georgian, so after the

Korax, it is replaced by Abkhaz." And further: "After crossing the Kodor, the Abkhazian people live with their own distinct language" (ibid, pp. 200-201).

Thus, for most of the 17th century, the ethnographic and political border between the Abkhazians and Mingrelians ran along the River Kodor. Only at the end of the 17th century, did Abkhazian rulers, taking advantage of the weakening of the Mingrelian principality and the favourable social factors, push the border of their possessions first to the River Ghalidzga, and then, at the beginning of the 18th century, to the River Ingur. In his 'History of Georgia', Vakhushti indicates:

“აფხაზნი...

დაიპყრეს ვიდრე ეგრისის მდინარემდე და დაიშენებოდნენ
თვით აფხაზნი”;

That is, "Abkhazians... took possession (of the territory) up to the River of Egrisi and settled there themselves" (edition 1913, p. 317).

In one of the sources of the early 19th century, it is reported that the sons of the Abkhazian ruler Zegnak Shervashidze - Rostom, Dzhikeshia, and Kvapu divided Abkhazia among themselves: Rostom, as the eldest, took Abkhazia proper, Dzhikeshia received *Shua-Sopeli* (i.e., the lands between the Kodor and Ghalidzga), and Kvapu - the region between the Ghalidzga and Ingur, which later, after Kvapu's son Murzakan, became known as *Samurzakano* [სამურზაკანო]. In the area taken from the Mingrelian *mtavars* by the Abkhazian rulers (*Shua-Sopeli* and *Samurzakano*), they settled several princely, noble, and peasant families (Achba, Inal-ipa, Maan, Zuhba, Ketsba, and others).

The fact that until the end of the 17th century, the ethnic and political border between Abkhazia and Mingrelia passed along the River Kodor is well-known in Georgian historiography (see, for example, S. Kakabadze. 'History of Georgia. The era of the new centuries', 1922; S. Makalatia. 'History and Ethnography of Mingrelia', 1941; I. Antelava. 'Essays on the History of Abkhazia in the 17th-18th centuries', 1950, and others [in Georgian]), but P. Ingorokva for some reason wants to present it as his own discovery.

Regarding the question of how ethnic changes occurred in the territory of Abkhazia, Ingorokva promised to dedicate to it a 'special essay' (p. 132), but we did not find this essay in the reviewed book. Therefore, let us recall how he explained this fact in the first published version of his work: "The population here changed only in the new centuries, namely in the 17th century, when this region was occupied by Caucasian highlanders (?! - Z.A.), and the ancient indigenous inhabitants of this region - Egrisi - partially settled in inner Egrisi, partly mixed with the Caucasian highlanders who settled here" (see Journal *Mnatobi*, No. 3 for 1950, p. 129).

Not to mention that such a statement in no way corresponds to historical reality, it should be emphasised that P. Ingorokva tries to deprive Abkhazians of even their ethnic name and vaguely calls them 'Caucasian highlanders'.

Now let's move on to the question of the time and conditions of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom. On p. 115, P. Ingorokva writes: "In Georgian historiography concerning the formation of Western Georgia – 'The Abkhazian Kingdom' - the view is accepted that in the second half of the 8th century there was a conquest of Western Georgia by the Abkhazians (who, in accordance with this erroneous view, were baptised into a non-Georgian tribe), and allegedly after this, for the two subsequent centuries (9th-10th centuries), there was a kind of 'Abkhazian era' in the history of Western Georgia."

Following this statement, P. Ingorokva quotes an extensive excerpt from the textbook 'History of Georgia' on the issue of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom (see the Georgian text in the edition of 1948, pp. 146-147; Russian translation of the textbook, 1946, p. 152), where the said opinion of P. Ingorokva is, allegedly, presented.

Without touching upon the question of the ethnic affiliation of the Abkhazians (see above), we emphasise that P. Ingorokva twice distorts the views of Academician S. N. Dzhnashia.

Firstly, S. N. Dzhnashia never categorically asserted that at the end of the 8th century there was indeed a conquest of Western Georgia by the Abkhazians. In the Russian translation of the textbook, he writes on this subject: "By this time, the ancient Laz Kingdom was already weakened, and the Abkhazian prince relatively easily annexed (thus does D`hanashia translate the verb დაპყრობა used in the original Georgian text) Egrisi proper and Argveti to his possessions" (p. 152). In the work 'On the time and conditions of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom', S. Dzhnashia speaks of the 'capture or peaceful annexation of Lazica by the Abkhazian ruler' (Works, vol. II, p. 339).

Therefore, S. N. Dzhnashia does not categorically assert the capture, conquest of Lazica, as P. Ingorokva attributes to him, but leaves this question open, allowing for the possibility of both 'capture' and 'peaceful annexation'.

As for P. Ingorokva himself, he interprets the question of the emergence of The Abkhazian (Western Georgian) kingdom as follows:

"In the main historical primary source - in the monument *Matiane Kartlisai* ['Chronicle of Kartli/Georgia – Trans.] – it is directly noted that the Abkhazian *eristav* ['feudal lord' – Trans.] separated from the Greeks (Byzantines), seized (დაიპყროა) Abkhazia and Egrisi up to the Likhi Ridge", that is, the Abkhazian *eristav* did not conquer Egrisi from Abkhazia, but

both regions, Abkhazia and Egrisi up to the Likhi Ridge, were captured from the Byzantines, liberated from Byzantine rule" (p. 116).

Here, P. Ingorokva combines two different facts: 1) the annexation of Egrisi to The Abkhazian kingdom and 2) the liberation of Abkhazia and Egrisi from Byzantine rule. In fact, as can be inferred from Sabanisdze's work, by the end of the 80s, Egrisi had already been included in the Abkhazian realm (see S. Dzhnashia, cited work, p. 339), and the liberation from Byzantium was carried out only in the 90s (most likely in the late 90s) of the 8th century (ibid., p. 361).

Due to the scarcity of sources, it is difficult to say for sure how the first act (i.e., the annexation of Egrisi to Abkhazia) was carried out; the author of *Matiane Kartlisai* connects this act with the death of the ruler of Egrisi, Ioanne, and the old age of Dzhuansher ("For *Eristav* Ioanne was dead and Dzhuansher was old"). Therefore, we find the following statement by Academician S. N. Dzhnashia to be well-founded:

"It is deeply interesting that Sabanisdze has no hint of Egrisi (Lazica) and its ruler; this fact, in light of some reports from other Georgian sources, suggests that by this time the imperial government managed to eliminate local administrative bodies and the last remnants of Lazica's autonomy, which facilitated its capture (or peaceful annexation, with the emperor's sanction) by the Abkhazian ruler" (ibid., p. 339).

On pages 200-201, P. Ingorokva talks about the unification of Abkhazia and Egrisi, but regarding his reasoning on this issue, two remarks should be made: firstly, he puts forward an unsubstantiated position that this unification occurred immediately after the expulsion of the Arabs from Western Georgia (p. 200), and secondly, he borrows from S. N. Dzhnashia's cited work the position on the circumstances of Leon II's adoption of the title of *mtavar* (p. 201). As for the question of Leon II's adoption of the title 'King of the Abkhazians', Academician S. N. Dzhnashia linked this fact directly to the liberation of Abkhazia, i.e., all of Western Georgia – both Abkhazia proper and Egrisi (see his work 'On the time and conditions of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom') – "completely from Byzantine dependence".

Thus, we see that P. Ingorokva, directing the sharpness of his criticism against Academician S. N. Dzhnashia, significantly distorted his views on this issue and yet partially borrowed his positions.

In this regard, we will point out another circumstance: P. Ingorokva, speaking about the "mistakes of Georgian historiography", criticises the textbook 'History of Georgia' edited by Academician S. N. Dzhnashia (first published in 1943), but does not say a word about how he himself covered the issue of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom back in 1941 in

the work 'Leonti Mroveli, Georgian Historian of the 8th Century', where he spoke about the "great movement and political expansion of the Abkhazian tribe" (see Proceedings of the Institute of History, Georgian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, vol. X, p. 127).

P. Ingorokva devotes pages 215-218 of his book to the direct question of the time and conditions of the emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom. It should be especially emphasised that here, too, he completely repeats the argumentation and conclusions on this issue contained in the work of Academician Dzhnashia 'On the Time and Conditions of the Emergence of The Abkhazian Kingdom'. In particular, following Dzhnashia, Ingorokva points to the following two circumstances that facilitated Leon II's liberation from Byzantine dependence: 1) the weakening of Byzantium (p. 216), and 2) the assistance from Khazaria (p. 217) and repeats the same date – the end of the 8th century (p. 216).

Not referring, in this case, to the said work of Dzhnashia, Ingorokva again appropriates someone else's position.

On pages 208ff., P. Ingorokva argues with Academician S. N. Dzhnashia on the question of whether the city of Trebizond was part of the Abkhazian principality or not. In his work 'On the Time and Conditions of the Formation of The Abkhazian Kingdom' (see *Works*, vol. II, pp. 322-341), Academician Dzhnashia convincingly demonstrated that Trebizond was not part of 'Abkhazia' but part of Byzantium. However, P. Ingorokva disagrees and tries to prove the opposite. On page 208 of his book, he quotes the following passage from N. Sabanisdze's work 'The Life of Abo of Tbilisi': "Their border (*i.e., the inhabitants of Abkhazia. - Z.A.*) is the Pontic Sea, the possession entirely of Christians, to the borders of Khaldia, where Trebizond is located, and the region of Apsarea and Napsais harbour..."

Then, identifying Napsais harbour with Nikopsia, P. Ingorokva interprets this quote as follows: "Their border (*i.e., the Abkhazian possessions of Western Georgia*) is the Black Sea ('Pontic Sea') the possession of Christians, to the places to which the borders of Chaldia stretch ('to the borders of Chaldia'). There (on the Black Sea coast of Western Georgia) are situated: Trebizond (at the southern border), Apsar (in the centre), and Napsais harbour (at the northern border)" (p. 211).

With such an 'interpretation', P. Ingorokva seeks to prove that Trebizond, as well as other points mentioned in Sabanisdze's work (Apsar and Napsais harbour), were part of the Abkhazian principality. In fact, I. Sabanisdze clearly indicates that the listed points were Byzantine possessions. This can be immediately confirmed if we fully quote the relevant passage from Sabanisdze's work.

"...And blessed Abo was even more grateful to God because he found that country (i.e., Abkhazia. – Z.A.) filled with the Christian faith and there is no unbeliever among the native inhabitants within their borders. For the Pontic Sea adjoins them, the possession entirely of Christians, to the borders of Chaldia, where Trebizond is situated, and the region of Apsarea and Napsais harbour. And those cities and places are the possession of the servant of Christ, the Ionian king, who sits on the throne in the great city of Constantinople" (see the publication by K. Kekelidze, 'Early Georgian Feudal Literature', 1935, p. 66).

Thus, the adduced quote contains a direct confirmation that Trebizond, Apsar, and Napsais harbour are the 'possession of the servant of Christ, the Ionian king', i.e., the Byzantine emperor. It is quite obvious that in this case, Sabanisidze's opinion leads to the following: Abkhazia is a completely Christian country because neighbouring it are Christian possessions, in particular, the cities - Trebizond, Apsar, and Napsais harbour, which are subject to the 'servant of Christ', i.e., the emperor of Byzantium.

However, such a uniquely correct interpretation does not suit P. Ingorokva, and he deliberately omits the relevant passages from Sabanisidze's work, i.e., commits a falsification of the historical source.

Moreover, P. Ingorokva did not mention that as early as 1935, Professor K. Kekelidze, in exact the same way as P. Ingorokva (also referring to P. Peeters), tried to prove that Trebizond was part of the Abkhazian principality (Kekelidze, cit. op., pp. 28 and 25).

In the work of S. Dzhnashia cited by P. Ingorokva (see pp. 208-209 of the reviewed book), a polemic is conducted against the incorrect point of view of P. Peeters and K. Kekelidze, but P. Ingorokva, in this case, tries again to push through this erroneous position, presenting it as his own discovery.

As for the other sources that Ingorokva mentions (pp. 12 et seq.) to substantiate his thesis on the inclusion of the Trebizond region in 'Abkhazia', they do not confirm this thesis at all. For example, the report of Epiphanius of Constantinople about Trebizond as a 'city of Lazica' (p. 214) or the report of Euphemia of Mtatsminda that Trebizond is located 'in the country of Megrelians' (p. 215) has only a geo-ethnographic meaning and does not testify to the inclusion of Trebizond in a political unit – The Abkhazian Kingdom. The said authors want to say that the city of Trebizond is geographically located in the country of the 'Laz people' or the 'Mingrelians'.

Now let's move on to the question of the national policy of The Abkhazian Kingdom and the so-called 'two-century Abkhazian era', which, allegedly, was written about by Academician Dzhnashia.

It must be emphasised from the very beginning that none of the Georgian historians, let alone Academician Dzhnanashia, have ever claimed anything like this. On the contrary, S.N. Dzhnanashia repeatedly emphasised that the policy of the 'Abkhazian dynasty' was precisely a Georgian policy, that the so-called 'Abkhazian Kingdom' was essentially a Georgian political entity, in which the Abkhazian elements themselves played a significant role.

Thus, in an essay on the history of Abkhazia, included in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Academician Dzhnanashia wrote: "Later, the residence of the Abkhazian kings became the city of Kutatisi (now Kutaisi), located closer to the central Georgian regions. This indicated the main direction of the policy of the Abkhazian Kingdom, which from the very beginning of its emergence entered the general system of feudal entities of Georgia... Abkhazian kings... embarked on the path of unifying not only Western Georgia but Georgia as a whole... By that time, Kutaisi had already become a point through which the country's most important route passed, where the economic and cultural ties of the West Georgian tribes intersected, and where, earlier than in other cities of Western Georgia, Georgian national culture developed, coming from Kartli. Since the end of the 8th century, the Georgian language finally displaced Greek, as evidenced by the preserved lapidary and other inscriptions of that time. Georgian literacy developed. The new Western Georgian entity adopted the name 'The Abkhazian Kingdom' " (Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 2nd ed., p. 47).

Thus, by attributing to Academician Dzhnanashia the thesis of some 'Abkhazian era', P. Ingorokva clearly distorts the truth. Moreover, on page 117 of his book, he presents the issue of the historical significance of The Abkhazian Kingdom in the same way as Dzhnanashia, thereby attributing this interpretation of the issue to himself.

Further, in connection with the question of the national policy of The Abkhazian Kingdom, P. Ingorokva elaborates on the issue of church-reform in Western Georgia, i.e., the question of when the Western Georgian church was freed from subordination to the Byzantine church, in connection with which, in particular, the Greek language was ousted from the church and replaced with Georgian (pp. 231 et seq.). Here, too, P. Ingorokva repeats the argumentation and conclusions on this issue contained in the work of Professor N.A. Berdzenishvili 'Vazirat in Feudal Georgia', part II (Proceedings of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences, vol. X, 1941), but does not refer to this work at all, thereby attributing to himself this scholarly position too.

Finally, let us dwell on another 'discovery' of P. Ingorokva. He claims that the ruling dynasty, which headed The Abkhazian Kingdom for two centuries, was not of Abkhazian but of Laz origin in terms of its national origin (p. 192). This 'discovery', one must assume, was needed by P. Ingorokva in case his attempt to push through his erroneous thesis on the ethnic affiliation of the Abkhazians failed – in this case, perhaps, it would be possible to at least take the dynasty away from the Abkhazians.

Regarding this issue, it should be noted first of all that P. Ingorokva himself once considered this dynasty to be 'Abkhazian' (see Proceedings of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences, vol. X, p. 130), but now he does not recollect this. However, Ingorokva was right, of course, then, not now. The position on the Laz origin of the 'Anosid' dynasty is far-fetched. To 'substantiate' this position, Ingorokva does not hesitate to falsify sources here either. Thus, he calls Leon I the '*mtavar* of Lazica' (p. 197), whilst sources always call him the '*eristav* of Abkhazia' (see, for example, *Kart. Tsovr., Annals of Queen Anna*, p. 152). To Byzantine historian Theophanes (1st half of the 8th century) is attributed by Ingorokva a report about *mtavar* of Lazica, Georgi Barnukovich (p. 196), who appears in Ingorokva's genealogical list (p. 193), whereas in reality, Theophanes mentions '*Petrikios* of Lazica, Sergej', not Georgi (see 'Materials on the History of Georgia and the Caucasus', 1940, vol. 1, p. 105). Such is how Ingorokva tries to 'substantiate' his invention!

In all this, of course, P. Ingorokva is far from understanding the real role of the Abkhazians in the history of Georgia.

How can it be explained that the Abkhazians, an ethnically non-Georgian tribe, played such an important, positive role in the history of Georgia? P. Ingorokva solves this question easily and simply: the Abkhazians are not Abkhazians, but Moschi[ans], i.e., a Georgian tribe, and therefore, they carried out Georgian policy. However, in reality, this is explained by the fact that long before the formation of The Abkhazian Kingdom, already from the first centuries of the 1st millennium BC, the population of Abkhazia became more and more closely connected - culturally, economically, and politically - with Western Georgia. The centuries-long coexistence of the Abkhazians with the Western Georgian tribes is widely reflected in archaeological and linguistic materials, as well as in written sources of various epochs. The prolonged inclusion of the ancestors of modern Abkhazians in the composition of the Colchian, and then Laz political formations, could not but be reflected in a corresponding way on the Abazgians-Abkhazians. In particular, the pro-Georgian policy of Leon I (1st half of the 8th century), who, being a vassal of Byzantium, at the same time considered himself a vassal of the Georgian kings Archil and Mir, clearly relied on the centuries-old traditions of Georgian-Abkhazian unity. Historical data (in particular, archaeological material) convincingly testify that the influence of ancient Georgian culture on the population of Abkhazia was much stronger than the Greek influence. The desire of the Abkhazian people to free themselves from Byzantine dependence could, under those historical conditions, be realised only as a result of strengthening unity with Western Georgia, and then with Georgia as a whole. That is why the ruling circles of Abkhazian society take a firm course towards further rapprochement with Georgia, which culminates in the formation of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

Unfortunately, up to now, no one in Georgian historiography has developed this issue, and, if P. Ingorokova had directed his research in this direction, he could have rendered a real service to scholarship. But instead, Ingorokova chose to put forward an incorrect thesis on the ethnic affiliation of the Abazgians-Abkhazians and brought an end to it.

Thus, in his "research" on the issues of the history of Abkhazia and The Abkhazian Kingdom, P. Ingorokova demonstrates the following features that are alien to a Soviet historian:

1. blatant dilettantism, ignorance of many facts and sources from the history of Georgia, the inability to interpret sources in a scholarly fashion;
2. appropriation of scholarly positions developed or advanced by others;
3. falsification of sources in order to 'justify' his erroneous positions;
4. ignoring materials that contradict his 'conception'.

Particularly condemned must be P. Ingorokova's harmful attempt to erase more than 1,500 years of the history of the Abkhazian people from the past, to strike out the centuries-old historical connection and unity of the fraternal Georgian and Abkhazian peoples.

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